

Message Text

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17/73

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

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USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05 OMB-01

/071 W

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R 181915Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9010

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 3887

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARAS 4. AND 5.)

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, NZ

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH OPPOSITION LEADER MULDOON

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. DURING RELAXED EVENING WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS DECEMBER 17, OPPOSITION LEADER ROB MULDOON OUTLINED HIS VIEWS AND OPINIONS ON NUMBER OF TOPICS. INTERESTED FIRST AND FOREMOST IN THE NEW ZEALAND ECONOMY, MULDOON CAME ACROSS AS A MAN CONFIDENT OF WINNING NEXT NOVEMBER'S ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. BY FAR THE MOST INTERESTING POINT ABOUT MULDOON IS HIS CONFIDENCE IN BEING PRIME MINISTER A YEAR FROM NOW. ALTHOUGH HE LEFT HIMSELF THE USUAL "IN POLITICS ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN" OUT, MULDOON SAID THE ODDS ARE PRESENTLY HEAVILY IN HIS FAVOR AND HE EXPECTS A WORSENING ECONOMIC
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SITUATION TO REINFORCE HIS POSITION.

3. COMMENTING ON THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, MULDOON HAD LITTLE TO SAY FOR THE ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL ABILITY OF PRIME MINISTER ROWLING. HE SAID LABOUR WAS STILL IN SOMETHING OF A STATE OF SHOCK FROM THE SUDDEN DEATH OF PRIME MINISTER NORMAN KIRK, WITH ROWLING UNABLE TO EXERCISE THE LEADERSHIP REQUIRED OF A PRIME MINISTER. MULDOON THOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT ECONOMIC MEASURES WOULD KEEP THING GOING FOR PERHAPS THREE MONTHS BUT WOULD NOT RESOLVE ANY OF THE BASIC PROBLEMS THE COUNTRY FACES.

4. MULDOON IS ALMOST TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH ECONOMIC ISSUES AND HIS ANALYSIS OF THE 1975 ELECTIONS SHOULD BE SEEN IN THAT LIGHT. HE BELIEVES UNEMPLOYMENT WILL BE ABOUT 3,000 AT MID-YEAR WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND MORE PEOPLE ON PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS. IN ADDITION, HE LOOKS FOR A MARKED DECREASE IN OVERTIME AND PART TIME WORK. EACH OF THESE FACTORS, IN GREATER OR LESSER DEGREE, WILL AID THE NATIONAL PARTY'S CHANCES.

5. MULDOON DISPLAYED LITTLE INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXCEPT IN THE TRADE AREA AND INDICATED THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO WOULD PROBABLY GO TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER SIR KEITH HOLYOAKE IN A NATIONAL PARTY GOVERNMENT. HE SAID RELATIONS WITH THE US WILL REMAIN MORE OR LESS CONSTANT NO MATTER WHICH PARTY GOVERNS NEW ZEALAND. SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY, MULDOON SAID THERE WAS LITTLE REASON TO MAINTAIN NEW ZEALAND TGOOPS IN SINGAPORE UNDER THE FPDA AND IMPLIED HE WOULD BRING THE BOYS HOME.

6. WITH THE QUIET SEASON IN NEW ZEALAND POLITICS WELL UNDER WAY, MULDOON EXPECTS TO RELAX UNTIL THE END OF JANUARY AND THEN UNDERTAKE A TRIP TO SOUTHEAST ASIA AND EUROPE. HIS PRESENT PLANS CALL FOR A SHORT STOP IN LOS ANGELES IN LATE FEBRUARY OR EARLY MARCH ON THE RETURN TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HIS RETURN MULDOON WILL KICK OFF NATIONAL'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN WITH A SERIES OF SPEECHES AROUND THE COUNTRY. HE WILL, OF COURSE, FOCUS ON THE ECONOMY AS THE MAJOR
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ELECTION ISSUE.

7. COMMENT - MULDOON MAY NOT BE AS CONFIDENT ABOUT WINNING NEXT YEAR'S ELECTION AS HE WOULD LIKE TO BE. TURNING OUT LABOUR WILL REQUIRE THE UNSEATING OF A MINIMUM OF TWELVE LABOUR MPS, ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE A DIFFICULT TASK UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. IF THE ECONOMY DEVELOPS ALONG THE LINES OUTLINED IN PARA 4 AND IF NEW

ZEALAND VOTERS REACT AS MULDOON EXPECTS THEM TO, NATIONAL MAY BE ABLE TO PULL IT OFF. THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS, HOWEVER, THAT ROWLING'S TINKERING WITH THE ECONOMY ON A QUARTERLY BASIS WILL KEEP THE SITUATION UNDER REASONABLE CONTROL. IF THAT OCCURS, VOTERS COULD WELL FEEL (AS THEY ARE ENTITLED TO DO AT THE MOMENT) THAT LABOUR'S JERRY-RIGGED SYSTEM IS DOING BETTER THAN PRACTICALLY ANYONE ELSE'S IN THE WESTERN WORLD. IN THAT CASE THEY JUST MIGHT WANT TO KEEP ROWLING IN OFFICE.
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